

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTIA 11916 171516Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2653
INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
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AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 11916

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT BL CH
SUBJECT: CHILEAN-PERU WAR TALK

REF: LA PAZ 9937

1. IN LIGHT OF REFTTEL AND OTHER INDICATIONS RE FEAR
OF WAR BETWEEN PERU AND CHILE ARISING FROM IMPASSE
IN BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR NEGOTIATIONS, WE SHOULD REPORT
THAT WE DO NOT SENSE IN SANTIAGO EITHER ANY DESIRE
FOR WAR OR SERIOUS FEAR THAT WAR IS IMMINENT. ON
THE CONTRARY, CHILEANS CONTINUE TO EXPECT THAT IN
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER THE CORRIDOR NEGOTIATIONS WILL GO
FORWARD, THOUGH THEY ARE NOT SANGUINE ABOUT ANY
POSITIVE RESULTS FOR A LONG TIME, IF EVER.

2. OUR BEST READING OF THE SITUATION AS SEEN BY THE
CHILEAN MILITARY IS THAT THEY ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED
ABOUT A POSSIBLE PERUVIAN ADVENTURE, ALTHOUGH THEY DO NOT
CONSIDER IT IMMINENT. THEY WILL APPARENTLY CONTINUE THE GRADUAL
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PAGE 02 SANTIA 11916 171516Z

STRENGTHENING OF THEIR FORCES IN THE NORTH, BUT PROBABLY AVOID
ACTIONS WHICH COULD INCREASE TENSION. THE CHILEANS ARE
IMPRESSED BY THE LOPSIDED AND GROWING ADVANTAGE IN MILITARY
MATERIAL ENJOYED BY PERU, AND BY THE DIPLOMATIC LINKS
PERU HAS MANAGED TO MAINTAIN WITH THE U.S., THE SOVIET
BLOC AND THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, IN CONTRAST TO CHILE'S

VIRTUAL ISOLATION. THE CHILEANS ASSERT THEIR INTENTION TO FIGHT FIERCELY WITH WHATEVER EQUIPMENT THEY HAVE IF THEIR NORTHERN BORDER SHOULD BE ATTACKED, BUT ARE CERTAINLY NOT CONSIDERING ANY ADVENTUROUS STEPS OF THEIR OWN.

3. ON THE DIPLOMATIC SIDE, THERE IS STILL AN EXPECTATION THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH PERU ON THE CORRIDOR WILL CONTINUE. THE BASIS FOR SUCH DISCUSSIONS IS FAR FROM CLEAR, SINCE EACH SIDE HAS REJECTED THE OTHER'S PROPOSALS. WE MENTIONED SOME POSSIBLE AREAS OF EXPLORATION IN SANTIAGO 11643. AS A VARIANT, GOC FONOFF POLITICAL ADVISER ENRIQUE BERNSTEIN RECENTLY REMARKED TO AMBASSADOR THAT THE PERUVIANS HAD AFTER ALL ACCEPTED CHILEAN PROPOSALS FOR A BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR, RUNNING AS FAR WEST AS THE TACNA-ARICA HIGHWAY. HE WAS APPARENTLY IMPLYING THAT THERE MIGHT BE ROOM FOR NEGOTIATING SOME OTHER FORM OF ARRANGEMENT FOR THE AREA BETWEEN THE HIGHWAY AND THE COAST ACCEPTABLE TO THE THREE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED. THE FIRST STEP, HOWEVER, IS TO ARRANGE FOR FURTHER DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS. THIS APPARENTLY HAS NOT BEEN DONE, AS LIMA REPORTS THE DECEMBER 20 MEETING OF CHILEAN AND PERUVIAN FOREIGN MINISTERS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN HUNG UP.

4. MEANWHILE, THE CHILEAN PRESS CONTINUES TO CARRY STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR THE CHILEAN POSITION BY ALL SORTS OF ORGANIZATIONS. THE TONE IS FIRM BUT IN NO SENSE INCENDIARY. IF THE GOC GOAL IS TO FAMILIARIZE THE ENTIRE POPULATION WITH THE EXISTENCE OF THE PROBLEM, ITS PRESS AND MEDIA ACTIVITIES HAVE DOUBTLESS BEEN SUCCESSFUL.
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PAGE 03 SANTIA 11916 171516Z

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